

Project Assessment and Evaluation Plan (PAEP)

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is the PAEP helpful to all kinds of projects, even those that fall into the planning and assessment category?

Yes! Assessing and evaluating project benefits is helpful to ensure the success of all projects. The key to evaluating “performance” is to link project goals to desired project outcomes and measurable targets (e.g., determine relative contributions of excessive sediment inputs into River X and prioritize pollutant load reduction efforts).

2. Are the “targets” we list in the summary table expected to be achieved at the end of the grant?

Targets are good-faith estimates of what grantees think may be achievable – not strict numbers by which a project will be judged. Targets are tools for grantees and grant managers to track project success and identify barriers to implementation.

3. Do “targets” have to be numeric or quantitative in all cases?

In most cases, a project goal (e.g., restore aquatic life uses in watershed, or provide tools to local government to develop an Action Plan) can be linked to some kind of numeric target (e.g., improve Index of Biological Integrity scores by 25%). By expressing targets in quantitative terms whenever possible, grantees will be able to more systematically measure and manage project success.

4. What is the difference between a PAEP, a Monitoring Plan and a QAPP?

The PAEP is a framework for your project that will help you determine if the project is heading toward success throughout the project’s life. It links the goals to targets that will be used as a “ruler” to monitor progress toward achievement of desired benefits within and outside the grant timeframe. It is a detailed summary of your project, which includes your full intentions for success, the way you plan to reach your desired outcomes, and what resources and tools you will use to track and meet desired outcomes.

The Monitoring Plan describes in detail WHAT water quality constituents you intend to measure, HOW you intend to collect and measure them, and WHO will be involved. The QAPP describes what kinds of samples and measurements you intend to take that enable you to quantify, evaluate, and document errors during sampling, analysis, mapping, and reporting, as well as how you intend to analyze data and share the information. The QAPP guides you in determining sensitivity, precision, accuracy, and completeness of your data, so they are suitable in answering your questions (e.g., have sampling stations exhibiting sediment toxicity decreased after implementation of BMPs?)

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5. How do you know the PAEP is adequate and ready for approval?

Use the [Abbreviated Guide to PAEP Approval \(new\)](#).

6. What's the difference between 'Outputs' and 'Outcomes', and how should they be reported?

*'Outcomes' are the results, impacts, or consequences of actions and activities pertaining to each of your project goals. 'Outcome Indicators' are the measurements you use to see if you have accomplished the intent behind each goal. Outcomes and goals can be arranged in hierarchical order. For example, the **ultimate** goal may be to restore a Chinook salmon run in a particular river, but several intermediate goals would affect the ultimate outcome of restoring the salmon run.*

'Outputs' are the widgets required to produce an outcome and accomplish the intent of each of your project goals. If the intent of one of the goals is to reduce nutrient loads to a coastal lagoon, an 'output' might be an installed natural treatment system or a restored freshwater marsh that can intercept the nutrient inputs into the drainage system before it reaches the coastal lagoon. If the intent of another one of your goals is to increase awareness of city council members, so they see the wisdom behind changing building codes to promote low-impact development, which may contribute to reductions in nutrient loadings, an 'output' may be the number of city officials that attend your training sessions or the number of course books you have distributed.

7. How can I utilize my PAEP during project implementation?

Each time you write a quarterly progress report, you can compare how your activities are gradually contributing to the targets in your PAEP Summary Table, what challenges you have encountered, what external factors beyond your control may require timeline adjustments, or if relative work effort among tasks may have to be re-aligned.

8. What is the difference between grant or loan agreement requirements and PAEP 'Targets'?

Targets are not part of your Grant Agreement. You are only responsible for delivering the items specified in your grant agreement, such as those listed in the Scope of Work (Exhibit A), and Table of Items for Review. However, targets are helpful in quantifying the desired outcomes associated with each of your project goals when writing the Final Report and should be used to document success.